Residential Design Guidelines

San Francisco Department of City Planning

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Residential Design Guidelines

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July 1989

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Section I
Introduction

Legal Basis

The Planning Code of the City and County of San Francisco provides that the Residential Design Guidelines adopted by the City Planning Commission shall be used to review neighborhood compatibility of new construction and alterations (Sec. 505[a][3], 503[b][3], and 505[c][3]).

Purpose and Intent: Relationship to Interim Controls

To a large degree, the character of San Francisco is defined by the visual quality of its neighborhoods. A single building out of context with its surroundings can have a remarkably disruptive effect on the visual character of a place. It affects nearby buildings, the streetscape, and, if repeated often enough, the image of the city as a whole.

Concern for the visual quality of the neighborhoods gave rise, in part, to the November 1986 voter initiative known as Proposition M which, among other things, established as a priority policy, that existing neighborhood character be conserved and protected. To ensure this, the Neighborhood Conservation Interim Controls were adopted in September 1988, which require the City Planning Department to use residential design guidelines in its review of residential building permit applications. The purpose of these Residential Design Guidelines is to assist in determining whether a new building, or the expansion of an existing one, is visually compatible with the character of its neighborhood.

The Planning and Building Codes establish basic limitations on the size of a building. A building built out to the legal limits established for height and setbacks and rear yards may, however, result in a building which is not compatible with the character of its neighborhood. To deal with this problem the Department of City Planning is reexamining

these legal limits. Interim controls have been adopted which will be in effect until March 1990 or until new rules are adopted. The interim controls provide that the Residential Design Guidelines shall be used to review the compatibility of new buildings and enlargements of existing buildings. They further provide that:

> *"The Department may require reductions in the height, depth and width of the new construction and alterations and may require setbacks in various sections of the structure in order to make the project compatible with its neighborhood and to reduce the loss to adjacent buildings of light, air or view."*

The interim controls establish a three- tier system of review based on the extent to which the size of a new residential building or an enlargement of an existing building deviates from the size of surrounding buildings, and particularly, the immediately adjacent buildings. The greater the deviation, the more extensive is the notice that must be given to other property owners, and the greater is the review by the Department of City Planning and the City Planning Commission of the appropriateness of the overall size of the new or enlarged structure. The interim controls are contained in Article 5 of the Planning Code which should be consulted for details. An information pamphlet contains instructions on how to prepare an application and what information needs to be submitted to enable staff to review the project. It is available at the Zoning Information Counter, 5th Floor (Room 502), 450 McAllister Street.

In summary, the project designer must work within the framework and process of the interim controls and the intent of these Guidelines to establish an appropriate overall size of a proposed new or enlarged building. The Residential Design Guidelines also address another dimension of design concern. Once the overall building size has been established, how should the building be designed in order to be compatible with its neighborhood?

The guidelines establish minimum criteria for neighborhood compatibility, not the maximum expectations for good design. Meeting the minimum criteria will not alone assure a successful project. That will require a sensitive design, carefully executed, and using quality materials. A thoughtful application of the guidelines will, however, assist in creating a project that is compatible with neighborhood character and will reduce the potential for conflict and the delay and expense of project revisions.

The intent of the Residential Design Guidelines is to achieve compatibility, not mimicry. New buildings need not copy older buildings, but they must be compatible with them and must make a positive visual contribution to the environment. Contemporary design is encouraged, provided the elements of their design are harmonious with the design elements of surrounding buildings.

The Guidelines are intended to be used by project sponsors and their designers in the project design process, by neighbors and community groups in their review of projects, and by the Department of City Planning staff and the City Planning Commission in their review and approval or disapproval of projects.

Where the Guidelines Apply

The guidelines apply in all residential districts (excluding residential commercial districts) with a height limit of 40 feet or less.

When the unusual characteristics of the project site, the unique scale and character of development in the surrounding area or other peculiarities of the project and its setting make the use of the adopted guidelines inappropriate, the Department may approve the use of alternative design guidelines for a specific project which more appropriately respond to the project and its neighborhood character (Section 505 of the Planning Code).

Additional Guidelines for Historic Buildings

Section 101.1 of the Planning Code also incorporates the priority policy that historic buildings be preserved. Alteration of an historic building therefore requires review by the City's Landmark Preservation Advisory Board, and the application of additional guidelines intended to preserve the historic character of the building. The term "historic building" includes all buildings designated as City Landmarks or located in historic districts, identified on the National Register of Historic Places, and all buildings rated in the 1976 Architectural Survey of Significant Buildings by the Department of City Planning.

Organization of the Guidelines and Function of the Illustrations

The Residential Design Guidelines are organized in the following way:

- Section II discusses what is meant by "neighborhood character" and describes several typical neighborhoods that a designer may face.

- Section III identifies basic elements of design, analyzes each of them, and presents guidelines for designing new buildings or alterations to assure compatibility with neighborhood character.

The drawings are intended to illustrate the text and are sometimes schematic. They are not design examples to be copied or imitated, although the drawings show only one side of the street, both sides of the street are of concern. The illustrations are of infill new construction or alteration of existing buildings on 25' wide lots in low density neighborhoods. However, the text is appropriate for new construction on wider lots and in higher density settings as well.

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Section II
Neighborhood Character

What is the "Neighborhood"?

In assessing whether the visual appearance of a new building or expansion of an existing one conserves the existing neighborhood character, neighborhood is considered at two levels:

- *The immediate context. Here the concern is how the building relates to its adjacent buildings (or, in the case of an enlargement how the addition relates to the existing structure) and how the form of the new or enlarged building impacts the adjacent buildings.*

- *The broader context. Here the concern is how the building relates to the visual character and scale created by the collection of other buildings in the general vicinity, particularly the buildings on both sides of the street in which the project is located.*

The application requirements for new construction and alterations subject to the interim controls (Department of City Planning, November 1988) include, on p. 15, photographs of certain buildings which provide the context of the new or expanded buildings at the two levels described above. It is compatibility with the character of those buildings that is the primary focus of these guidelines.

What is the "Block-Face"?

The block-face is the row of front facades, facing the street, for the length of one block.

Respect the Established Context: Flexibility in Design

Building patterns and rhythms which help define the visual character should be respected. A street may have a pattern and a rhythm which unify the rows of buildings on either side. A sudden change in this pattern, an over-sized bay window or a blank facade among more detailed ones, for example, can appear disruptive and visually jarring.

In certain neighborhoods, the visual character will be so clearly defined that there is relatively little flexibility to deviate from established patterns. However, in the majority of cases there will be greater leeway in design options.

In many areas, architectural styles are mixed or significant demolition and redevelopment have already occurred. Other neighborhoods show little visual character and seem to be awaiting better definition. Here, design should go beyond compatibility with the existing context; it should take the opportunity to help define a desired future visual character for a place.

The following discussion is intended to help identify the restrictions and opportunities presented by a particular neighborhood context and to understand the degree of design flexibility that exists.

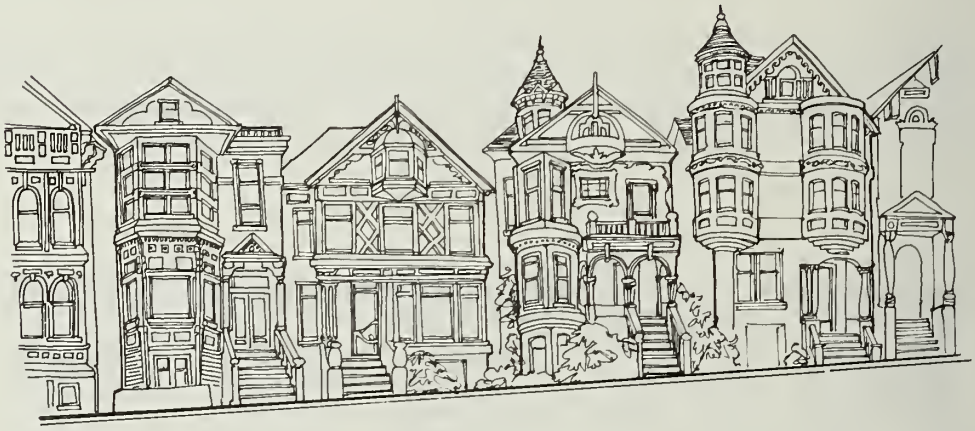
Clearly Defined Visual Character

On some block-faces, existing building patterns and architectural styles will strictly define the options for new development. A predominant visual character is clear in the strong repetition of forms and building types in the example shown below.

A small deviation in this neighborhood pattern would draw a great deal of attention to a new structure — attention that is damaging to the existing street character.

Complex Situations

In other situations, building forms and structures are more varied, yet the row still "works", and the buildings share a strong, unified sense of character. Patterns in building siting, form, proportion, texture, detail and image are strong but more subtle than in the previous example. Consider the three examples below:



In the last example, there is considerably less unity among the images of the facades.

When existing patterns and rhythms are ignored, the visual character will be damaged. In each of the examples below, the new building is disruptive to the overall feeling of the streetscape when compared to the block-faces on the previous page.

Undefined Visual Character

In many block- faces, an overriding visual character may not be apparent, or the character may be mixed or changing.

When no clear pattern or style is evident on a block-face, a designer has both a greater flexibility in design, and a greater opportunity (as well as responsibility) to help define, unify, and contribute positively to the existing visual context. Existing incompatible or poorly designed buildings in the project's area, however, do not free the project sponsor from the obligation to enhance the area through sensitive development.

The following five examples show the great flexibility of design solutions when the neighborhood character is undefined. Each response, however, is derived from existing visual patterns and each attempts to unify the block-face.

Section III
Elements of Design

In its review of design proposals, the Department considers both how a design works as a whole within the broader neighborhood context as well as how the components of the building facades relate to one another and to those on adjacent buildings. A relatively minor alteration in one design element of a building can have major impacts on the project's compatibility.

In order for project sponsors and designers and the project's neighbors to constructively discuss a proposal's implications on the visual quality of a neighborhood, all parties must understand how the individual elements of design work together and affect the whole composition.

The photographs of the site and the block face which are required with the submission of each building permit application should be assembled at the beginning of project design so that design compatibility judgments can be made from the outset. Using the site photographs, each of the principal design elements can be outlined on tracing paper, to identify repeated forms, patterns, and rhythms present in the area. The designer can then consciously repeat, deviate from, or introduce new design elements, as appropriate.

The review process is based on the analysis of certain fundamental elements of design. The Residential Design Guidelines divide these elements into five separate, but related, considerations, as outlined on the following page:

1 Siting

- **Location** of a project site, and its topography.
- **Setback** of the building from the front property line.
- **Rear Yard** i.e. the setback of the building from the rear property line.
- **Spacing** between buildings.

2 Building Envelope

- **Roofline** and profile the building makes against the sky.
- **Volume and Mass** as expressed by the visible facades.

3 Scale

- **Dimensions** of the elements which make up the building's facades.
- **Proportions** of the building, and of the elements of its facade.

4 Texture and Detailing

- **Materials** used to finish the surface of the building.
- **Ornamentation** used, including the amount, quality, and placement.

5 Openings

- **Entryways** - The pedestrian entries into the buildings.
- **Windows** - How they are articulated and used in the facade.
- **Garage Doors** - The vehicular entries into the building.

For each of the five design elements, the following discussion presents:

- A broad **definition** of the design element.
- A series of **questions** highlighting the major design issues under each element.
- **Guidelines** to follow for ensuring design compatibility.

Siting

The topography and location of the project lot and the position of the building on that site guide the most basic decisions about design. The **Location, Front Setbacks, Rear Yards** and **Side Spacings** will be particularly important to the adjacent neighbors and for maintaining or creating rhythm along the block-face, and maintaining a sense of common open space in the interior of the block.

Location

Location refers both to the topography of the site (is it on a hill, in a valley, or along a slope?) and to its position in relation to other buildings and significant urban features.

- *Does the site draw attention to itself because of its topography or position on the block?*
- *Will the project be competing for attention with neighboring structures?*

Respect the Topography of the Site

New buildings should not disregard or significantly alter the existing topography of a site. The context should guide the manner in which new structures fit into the streetscape, particularly along slopes and on hills.

Harmonious

Note how all buildings on this street respect the slope toward the street and the slope up the hill.

Disruptive

The insensitive response to the sloping site is clear in how the subject building is set back from the street, and how its facade and its garage entry overwhelm the adjacent buildings.

Emphasize Corner Buildings

Corner buildings play a stronger role in defining the character of the neighborhood than other buildings along the block-face. They can act as informal entryways to the street, setting the tone for the streetscape which follows.

Designs for corner buildings should recognize this by giving the building greater visual emphasis. Emphasis might be given by greater height, a more complicated form or projecting facade element, or richer and stronger decoration.

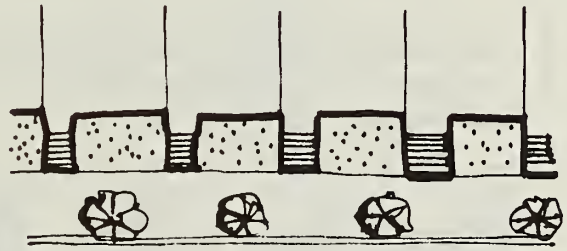
Setbacks

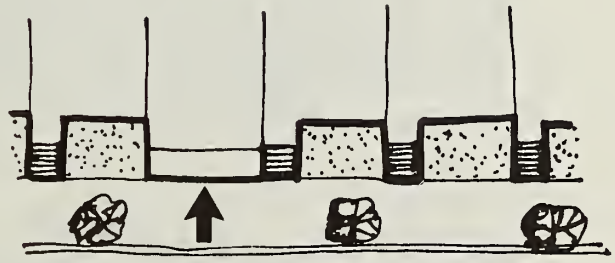
Building setbacks are the distance between the structure's edges and the front property lines. The pattern of setbacks helps establish a rhythm to the block-face and provides a transition between the public sidewalk space and the privacy of the building.

- *Is there an existing pattern of building setbacks?*
- *What effect will changing this pattern have?*
- *Do the proposed setbacks create new building corners along the block-face?*

Respect Setback Patterns

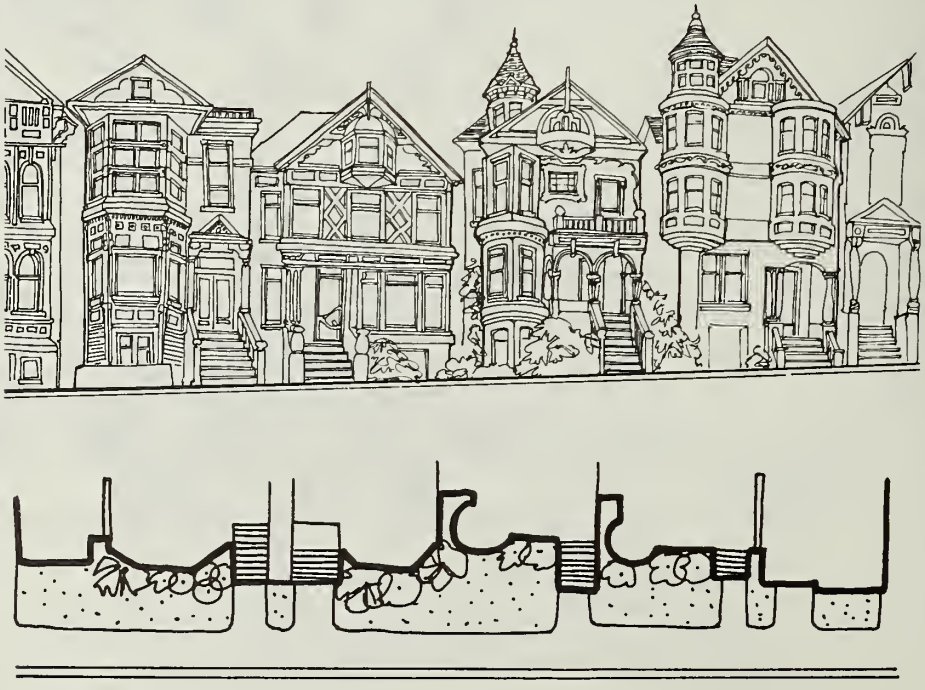
A setback that goes against the established pattern will be disruptive to neighborhood character.





Below, each building is set back from the property line to a similar degree. (Portions of the facades are recessed even further creating partial setbacks.) The setbacks help to define the transition between the private spaces and public street areas. Landscaping can also soften this transition. Existing patterns of landscaped front setbacks should be retained.

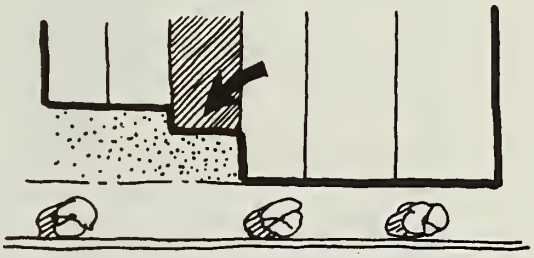
In some situations, the existing setback pattern is more random and less unified. In these situations, as in this example, variations in the setback pattern may help to enliven the streetscape.



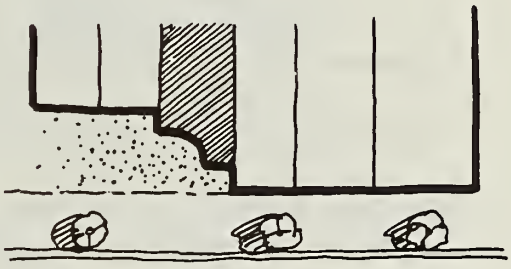
Respond to Building Corners Created by Setbacks

Changes to a uniform setback pattern can create building corners along the block face. These corners often draw attention to themselves and take on a special role in the street composition of the streetscape. They should be designed to acknowledge this role.

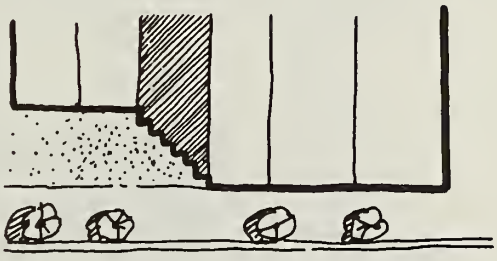
A blank wall here can detract and should be designed to acknowledge its more prominent position. At minimum, all materials and colors should be continued along the exposed facades (see Texture and Details).



Wrapping a facade around a corner may be a better response to a special location.

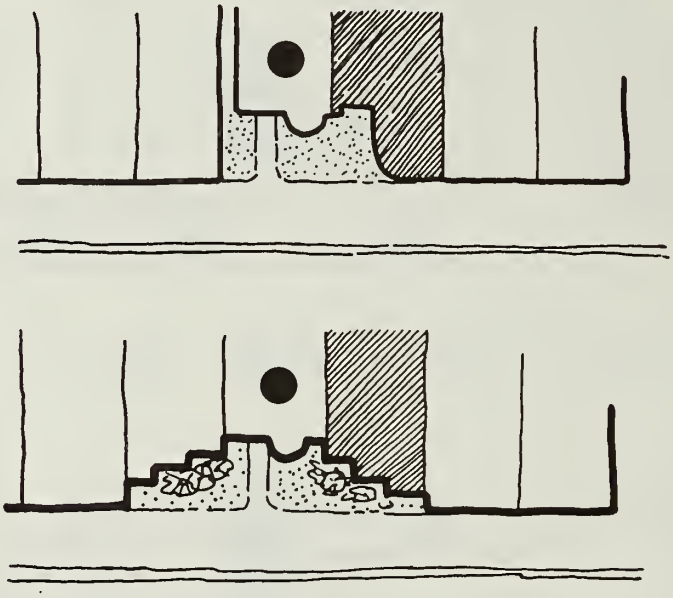


A special design treatment which emphasizes the corner can enhance the street.



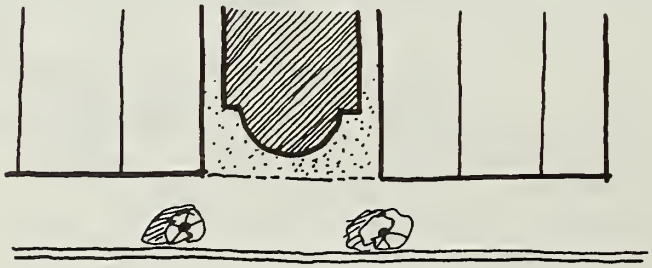
Acknowledge Significant Neighboring Buildings

In some cases, a proposed project is adjacent to a historically or architecturally significant building. These structures are often setback from the street or are on wider lots with gardens in the front. For these lots, the open space can sometimes be even more important than the building itself. The setback treatment should be sympathetic to the importance of the building, its setback and the open space.



Provide a Setback to Accommodate Projections of Architectural or Decorative Features

Except for minor encroachments, architectural or decorative features are not permitted to overhang the sidewalk for the first 10 feet above the sidewalk, a height intended to provide the pedestrian adequate headroom. Therefore, in order to allow for appropriate architectural or decorative features at the base of the building, the building may need to be set back from the front property line.



Rear Yards

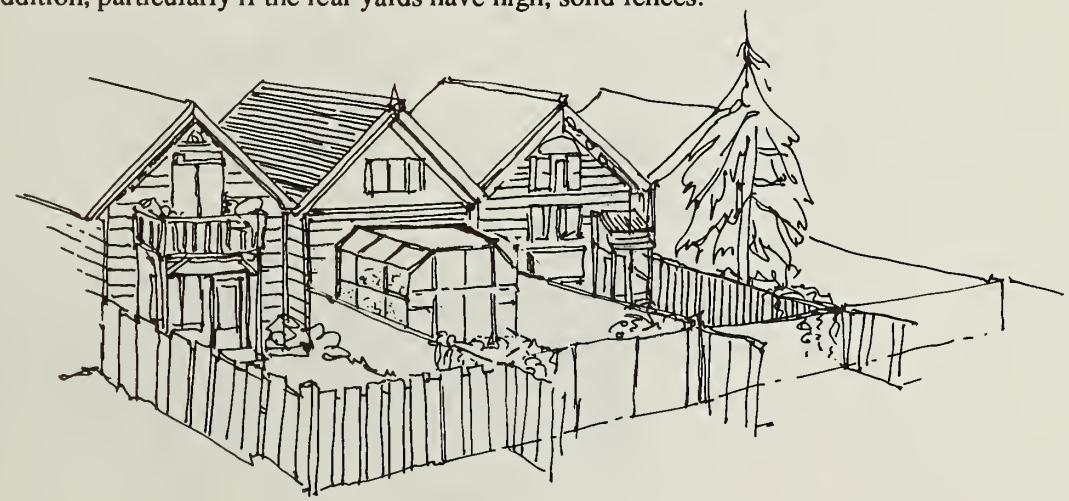
Rear yards are the spaces between the back of the building and the rear property line. In addition to serving the residences to which they are attached, they are in a sense public in that they contribute to the interior block open space which is shared visually by all residents of the block.

- *Is there a pattern of rear yard depths creating a common open space?*
- *Will changing this pattern have a negative effect?*
- *Are light and air to adjacent properties significantly diminished?*

Respect Rear Yard Patterns and Adjacent Buildings

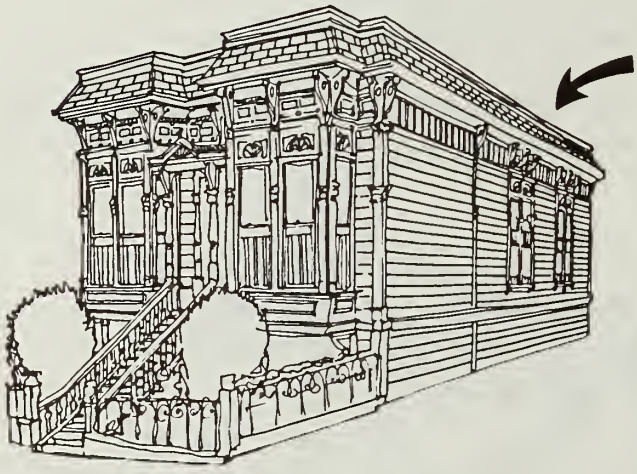
Intrusions into the rear yard, even though permitted by the Planning Code, may not be appropriate if they fail to respect the mid-block open space and to reduce adverse impacts on adjacent buildings.

A one-story rear addition is likely to have less impact on the common open space than a two story addition, particularly if the rear yards have high, solid fences.



Often a small set back or notch can prevent blockage of a neighbors window or light well, or a slight reduction in height can avoid blockage of a view. These kinds of "good neighbor" gestures should be incorporated into the design.

The rear of the building, while not as public as the front of the building, still is in view of neighboring properties and often, depending on topography, of those far beyond. This facade should also be compatible with the character of its neighborhood. The exposed siding of a rear extension should be architecturally finished because of its visual impact on adjacent properties.



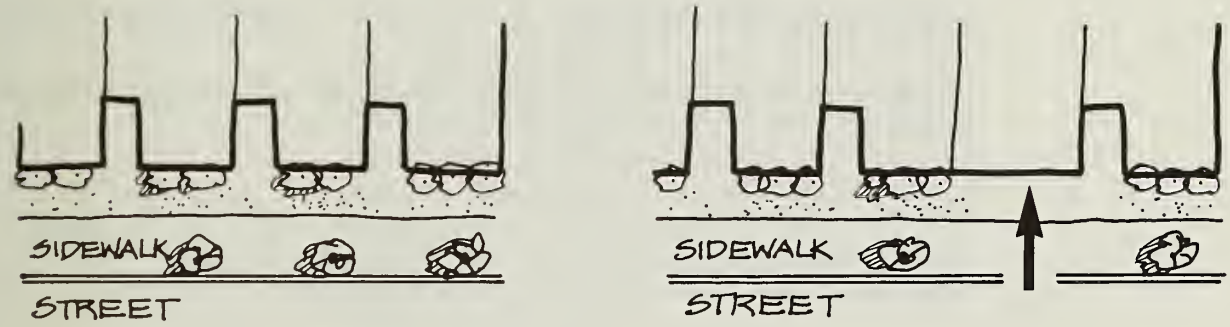
Side Spacing

Spacings are the separations, existing or perceived, between buildings. Side or "notch-backs" between buildings help to underscore the separate nature of each unit and set up a characteristic rhythm to the streetscape composition.

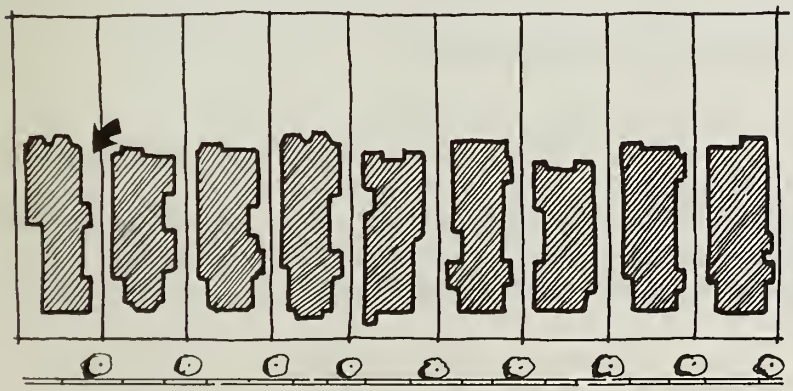
- *Is there a pattern of side spacing between the buildings?*
- *Will changing this pattern have a negative effect?*
- *Can a negative impact be minimized by changing the design?*

Respect Spacing Pattern

As with setbacks, a poorly designed notch-back between buildings can strongly impact the neighboring buildings as well as be visually disruptive.



Proposed projects should respect the existing pattern of spacings between buildings.



Building Envelope

The building envelope refers to the exterior elements of a structure — the roof, the front, rear and side facades and other projecting elements such as bays, overhangs and balconies. The actual envelope of a building, within the maximum envelope established by the Planning and Building Codes, should be compatible with the envelopes of surrounding buildings. This section focuses specifically on two aspects of the building envelope which are crucial for compatible design — the **Roofline** and the appearance of **Volume and Mass.**

Roofline

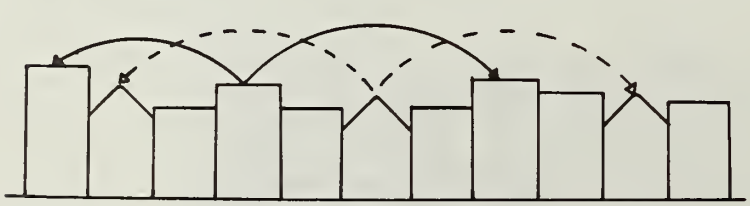
The roofline refers to the profile of the building against the sky.

- *Is there an identifiable pattern to the rooflines of buildings on the blockface?*
- *What choices are there to respond to this pattern?*
- *Can the impact of unavoidable disruptions to the pattern be lessened?*

Respect Roofline Patterns

In general, a strong repetition of consistent rooflines calls for similar design for new construction.

Broad patterns may not be apparent unless the entire block-face is considered.



Minimize the Impact of Inconsistent Building Rooflines

The impact of inconsistent building forms should be responded to creatively.

There is likely to be more than one way to address a complex pattern of rooflines. While the design may respond more specifically to one pattern over another, picking up on several patterns may help to tie the streetscape composition together.

When the inconsistency results from the new building being taller than adjacent buildings, setting the taller element back from the street through a set-back at the prevailing street wall height may be necessary.

Volume and Mass

Volumes are the three dimensional forms of the building. Mass is created by their spatial arrangements and surface treatments. Together they define a building's bulk, weight, and depth. The appearance of volume and mass, influences how people perceive a building as they pass by. San Francisco has a tradition of buildings which exhibit a strong sense of volume and mass; facades tend to have sculptural, three dimensional qualities and the buildings themselves seem to be solidly rooted to the ground.

- *Have the elements which contribute to the feeling of volume and mass along the block-face been identified?*
- *Can the appearance of compatible volume and mass be created in the new structure with facade articulation and ornamentation?*

Compatibility of Volume and Mass

The volume and mass of a new building or an addition to an existing one should be compatible with that of surrounding buildings. Corner buildings tend to show mass and volume more clearly than mid-block buildings and therefore need special attention.

Identify and Incorporate Elements which Contribute to the Appearance of Volume and Mass

Perhaps the easiest way to understand the forms which influence this design element is to outline them using photographs of the block-face and tracing paper. In the following example, both the protruding forms and the recessed areas which create the sense of volume and mass have been identified. With this information the compatibility of the volume and mass of the proposed project can be judged.

Take the original photographs....

...outline the basic forms...

...add shading to identify elements with volume and mass.

Utilize Ornamentation

The amount and level of detail of the facade ornamentation (see Texture and Details) influence the sense of volume and mass.

Lack of decorative features or use of fine scale decoration tends to create a facade with little sense of volume and mass.

In this example, the cornice and window treatment, as well as the change in materials and entry-way - if consistent with the surrounding buildings - help to create the appearance of greater volume and mass.

Effect of Light and Shadows

Light and shadows cast on a facade help define the sense of volume and mass. Openings in the facade - windows, pedestrian and vehicular entries - play an important role in the creation of shadows.

Protruding facade ornamentation which casts shadows tends to increase the sense of volume even on a flat facade. Simple and large shadows accenting recessed areas can provide a greater sense of mass as in the following example.

Scale

The scale of a building is its perceived size relative to the size of its elements and to the size of elements in neighboring buildings. The scale of any new building or building alteration should be compatible with that of neighboring buildings. To assess compatibility, the dimensions and proportions of neighboring buildings should be examined.

Dimensions

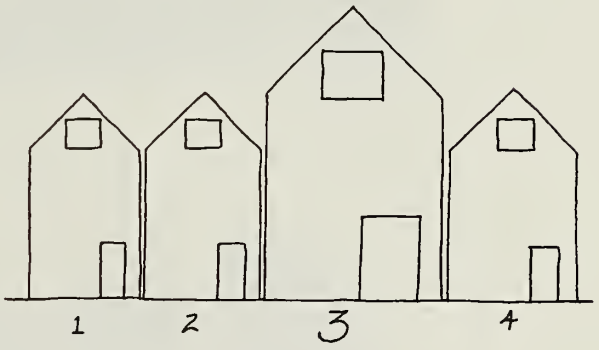
Dimensions are measures of length, width and height.

- *Does the building seem under or oversized in relationship to the buildings around it?*
- *Do certain elements of the building seem to be the wrong size in relation to other parts?*
- *Can the dimensions of the project be adjusted to relate better to the surrounding buildings?*

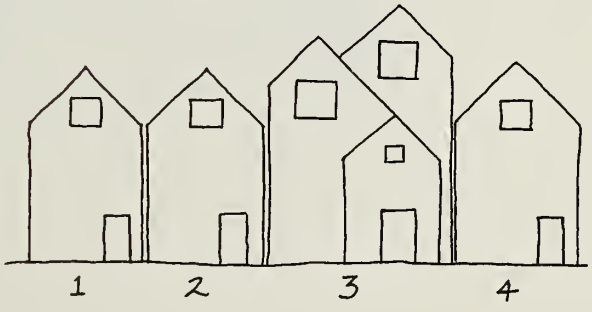
Respect the Scale of the Neighborhood

If a building is actually larger than its neighbors, it can often be made to look smaller by facade articulations and setbacks. If nothing helps it may be necessary to reduce the actual size of the building.

Buildings may be compatible with their surroundings in terms of proportions, but still be out of scale. Building #3 is too high and too wide.



As in the example above, building #3 is bigger than its neighbors but it is in scale with them because the width of the facade has been broken up and the height has been reduced.



Proportions

Proportions are dimensional relationships among the building elements. These relationships exist at several levels: the relationship between the dimensions (height, width and depth) of each element of the building, the relationship of the dimensions of the element to each other and to the building as a whole, and the dimensional relationship of the building to other buildings along a block-face.

- *Have the prevailing proportions along the block-face been identified?*
- *Can the proportional relationship in the proposed project be identified?*

Compatibility of Vertical and Horizontal Proportions

The overall sense of a building working well within a particular context is often the result of carefully developed dimensional relationships. Poorly proportioned buildings may seem out of balance, inconsistent or un-harmonious with their surroundings.

The proportions of the basic shapes of a project should be compatible with those of surrounding buildings. A basic step in identifying the proportions on a block-face is to map (in the manner described on p. 26) the vertical and horizontal elements that define the facades of a building, such as doorways, windows, cornices and garage doors and then analyze their dimensional relationships.

Adjust Proportions for Greater Compatibility

A simple change in proportions can often have an enormous impact on how a building fits into its surroundings. A building with strong horizontal elements in an area where verticals elements predominate can be disruptive. The example below illustrates a change in window proportions. The guideline applies, however, to any element of the facade.

The change in window proportions help make this building more compatible with its context. Other design elements would of course have to be addressed before it would meet the minimum standards of these Guidelines.

Texture and Detailing

Texture refers to the visual surface characteristics and appearance of the building facade. Detailing refers to the manner in which building parts are put together. The texture and detailing of a building's facade often have the strongest impacts on how people perceive a new structure and, therefore, on their sense of the character of the neighborhood. The use of **Materials** and the degree of **Ornamentation** give the building its texture.

Exterior Materials

Exterior materials are the architectural finishes used on the visible, exterior parts of the building.

- *Do the building materials complement those used in the surrounding area? Is the quality of the materials comparable to that of other nearby buildings?*
- *Could the materials be finished in a way that would improve their appearance?*

Use Compatible Materials

As with other design elements, the surrounding context provides the cues for the choice of materials. A shingled building, for example will not fit in well in a row of painted stucco homes.

Use of similar surface materials will help fit a new structure into the streetscape. Unpainted plywood typically blends poorly with traditional siding.

Appropriateness of the Choice of Materials

Attention must be given to how many different materials will be used on a facade, how the materials will be applied and distributed, and what materials are chosen. While in some projects the use of a variety of materials, stucco, brick and wood siding, for example, together can result in successful design, in others the variety will seem cluttered and distracting. The key to determining whether choices of material are appropriate is in understanding what the design is trying to achieve.

Is a variety of materials being used to create more visual interest in a blank, flat facade? If so, the problem should probably be dealt with by using more interesting architectural form.

Are different materials being used to define different levels of a building, such as the base, the middle, or the top? The sensitive use of different materials can help express the buildings's structure in a highly visible manner. In determining what materials are appropriate for this purpose, it is helpful to class the materials by their visual qualities, such as sturdy, massive, heavy, light, delicate, ethereal, etc.

Is the variety of materials responding to a pattern of materials prevalent in the block-face? If so, it is helpful to do a careful analysis of what type of materials are being used. Brick, for example, can be clean and smooth, or rustic and knobby, and can range in color and finish. Choosing among the varieties of a specific material is as important as choosing among the materials themselves.

Materials should appear as integral parts of the structure rather than "pasted on". Cheap looking and flimsy materials should not be used.

Ornamentation

Ornamentation is the refinement of detail and the application of decorative elements with the sole purpose of enhancing the building's appearance.

- *Does the project stand out as excessively plain or overly decorated?*
- *Does the ornamentation make sense for the building or is it simply copied from those surrounding it?*
- *Is the scale of the ornamentation appropriate?*

Respect Amount and Level of Detail of Surrounding Ornamentation

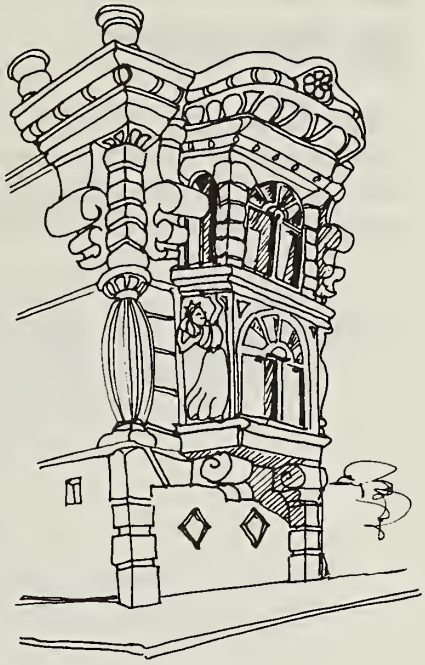
The richness and level of detail of ornamentation in the surrounding area should be used as a guide, without exactly mimicking the neighboring facades. For example, a relatively flat facade with little ornamentation will be inconsistent in an area which has a high degree of facade ornamentation and vice versa.

In any event, stark, flat facades and large visible and undifferentiated sidewalls should be avoided by articulating their form and/or through the use of ornamentation. All materials and colors should be extended along all exposed sides of the building.

Ornamentation should be used with understanding and restraint, with consideration of the visual character of the neighborhood. The use of decorative brackets, eaves, dentils, cornices, columns and capitals, for example, should come from an awareness of the evolution of such building elements and of their original, structural function; columns hold up buildings, brackets support overhangs, etc.

Ornamentation has also evolved throughout particular periods of architectural style. An analysis of the predominant era of architecture represented in the neighborhood adjacent to the project will be helpful. A project decorated with Victorian ornament in a neighborhood of stucco buildings typical in the Outer Sunset would seem inappropriate. An understanding of the differences among such important architectural styles in San Francisco as Italianate, Queen Anne, Stick, Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, and Craftsman would be a valuable tool for a designer working in a neighborhood of older, more historic buildings.

Ornament that has been carelessly "tacked on" to the facade of a building can cause much architectural disorder. In the example at right, the level and scale of ornamentation is exaggerated and grotesque, and this building would seem out of context in any neighborhood.



The restraint and simplification of ornamentation in this example makes this building compatible with a variety of neighborhoods from Victorian to Colonial Revival and Craftsman.

Openings

Typically openings in a building — **Doorways, Windows** and **Garage Doors** — make up the largest and most distinctive elements of a building's facades. While these features have been considered under each of the previous four Design Elements, they are highlighted separately here for clarity of presentation.

Entryways

Entryways refer to the pedestrian, as opposed to vehicular, entries into the building. They comprise doorways, porches, stairs, and other elements that contribute to the sense of arrival into the building.

- *Are the project's doorways compatible in size importance and details with those around them?*
- *Has a possible existing pattern of stairways been identified?*
- *Does the project respond to this pattern or does it ignore it?*
- *Are the neighboring doorways plain, ornate, prominent, hidden...?*

Respect Stairway Pattern; Position and Level of Entry

Doorways should be designed to be consistent with the surrounding entries. In a neighborhood where the predominant pattern is of stairways located on one side of the building, ignoring this pattern could be disruptive. Where symmetry or asymmetry has become an important ingredient of a building group, the goal is to respect it and respond sensitively to it.

Similarly, a ground level entry in a row of structures with raised entries could interrupt an important pattern.

In the example below, the pattern may seem less clear. The repetition of raised, large, off center entrances, however, is important to respect. It adds richness and rhythm to the block-face.

Respect Entryway Patterns

A building with a small entryway can be disruptive to an area with more elaborate entries. In the example below, the doorway appears undersized and inadequate next to the entries with more detailed porticos and decorative features.

Proposed Entryway

Expanding the scale of the entry by bold framing can help to bring the building into harmony with the surrounding entryways.

Proposed Entryway

Windows

Windows are the link between the inside, private space and the outside, public space. Windows mark the rhythm along the block-face and contribute to the sense of mass of the facades. They emphasize the proportions of a building, can contribute to it's ornamentation, and help define its texture.

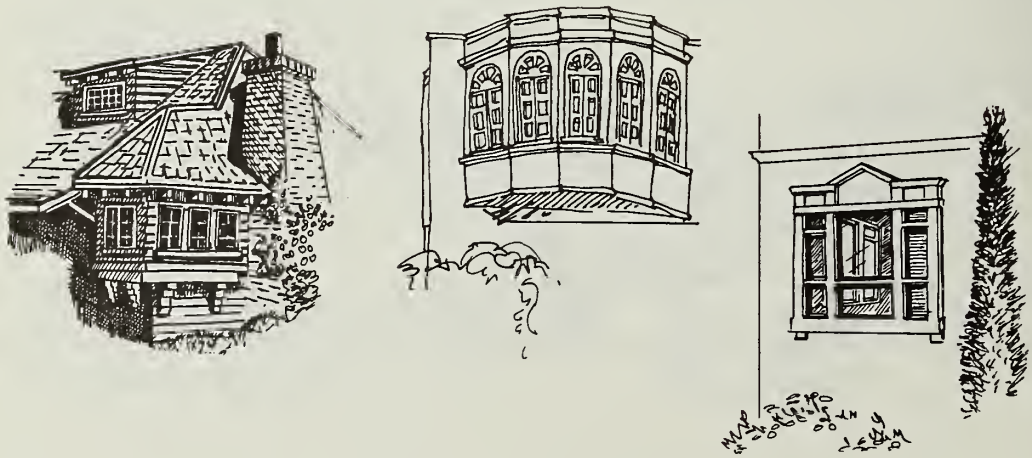
- *Is the choice of windows—their configuration, proportions, details and materials— appropriate?*

Compatibility of Windows

The proportion, size and detailing of windows should relate to that of existing adjacent buildings. Most residential buildings have a vertical orientation, while horizontally oriented or even square window shapes are found in commercial and industrial areas. The proportion of window (void) to wall (solid) area on a facade varies with building type. New windows should approximate ratios of neighboring structures while meeting the building's functional needs.

Since windows in most older buildings are framed by a variety of elements such as sash, stained glass, lintels, sills, doors, pediments, or heads, new structures should avoid designing windows which are not differentiated from the wall plane. Wood window frames are usually more harmonious with surrounding structures than steel or aluminum frames. Generally, older buildings have inset windows with a generous reveal. Individual windows should be consistent with pane divisions on neighboring buildings, which are often double-hung or casement sash.

Below are a few examples of windows in existing buildings which enrich the building facade when used appropriately. They suggest some of the possibilities for alterations in older buildings. It is not intended that they be imitated in the design of new buildings.



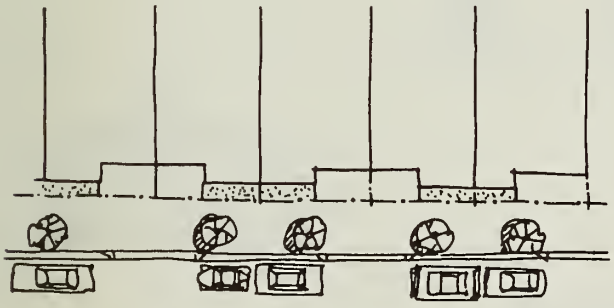
Garage Doors

This refers to the auto entry to the building - the doors, their architectural frame and the driveway. This element occupies a major portion of the ground floor of a building on the typical 25 feet wide lot, and, therefore, has major impact on the pedestrian perception of the building.

- *Does the proposed garage doorway fit in with the design of the rest of the project?*
- *Is the scale of the garage door compatible with its adjacent garage doors?*
- *Can the visual dominance of the door be reduced?*
- *Can its visual appearance be improved?*

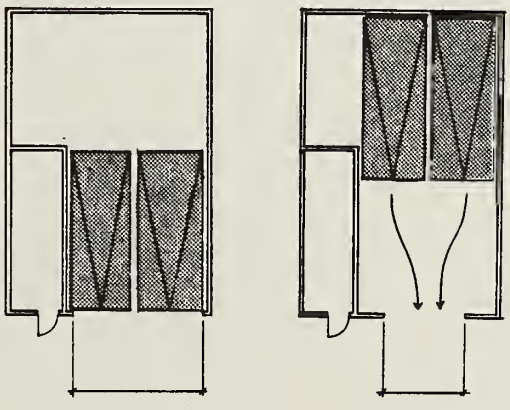
Compatibility of Garage Entry

The design of the garage door should be compatible with the scale of the building and other surrounding buildings on the block. It should create visual interest and should be opaque so the parked vehicle cannot be viewed from the street.



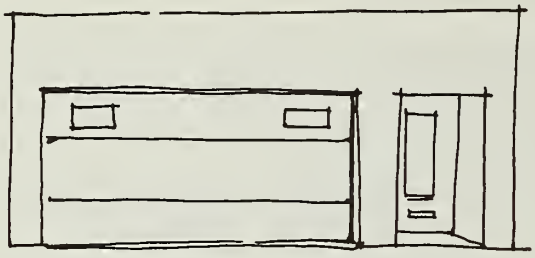
Minimize Negative Impacts of Garage Entries

The garage door is often the largest opening in the front of the building. Care must be taken to prevent it from becoming the dominant feature. In most of the city's residential neighborhoods, the width of the garage doors is between eight and twelve feet. The interim controls establish 12' as the maximum width. If the garage is made deep enough, cars can maneuver once inside and the garage door can be reduced and made a less prominent feature of the building facade.

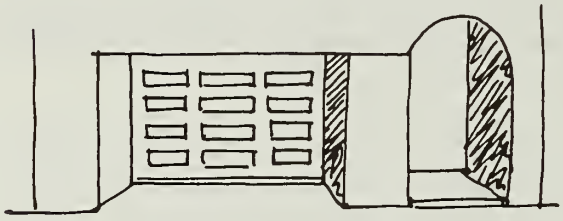


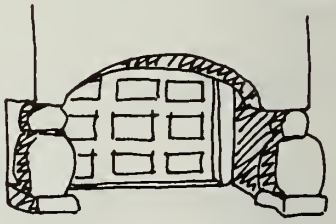
Below are several examples of ways to design garage doors so that they contribute to the buildings character rather than disrupt it.

This garage door presents a blank, dull expanse.

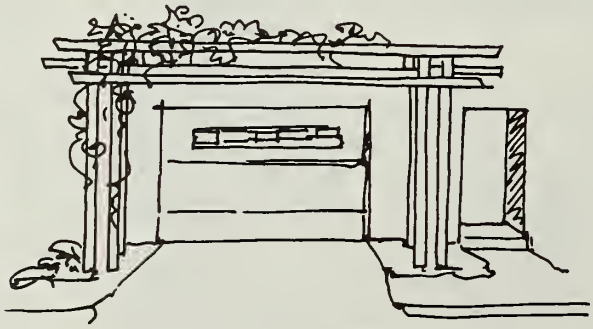


A recessed or arcaded garage door is less intrusive.





Garage doors can be embellished to make them more attractive.



Other Parking Openings

On wider lots all of the street level facade may not be needed for garage or building entries. Preferably occupied rooms with windows should occupy the frontage with any parking pulled back from the property line. When parking is at the front of the building care should be taken to screen the parking from view and to make the wall visually interesting. Openings to the parking area, other than garage door, should be limited to those required by the Building Code for ventilation, should be well below eye level, and should be decoratively screened in a way that will block the view of the parking area from the street.

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